

human secrets

(book one)



stories by

Crad Kilodney

HUMAN SECRETS

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CHARNEL HOUSE

Toronto, Canada

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JANITORS

Back row, l. to r.: Mr. E. Verdoold, Mr. A. Keating, Mr. J. Boyd, Mr. R. Abbot.
Front row: Mr. C. Munro, Mr. W. Weldon, Mr. W. Malakoff.

JANITORS AND KITCHEN STAFF

Look at Mr. E. Verdoold. He is in charge of the furnace. He seems happy enough posing for this picture. But there is a subtle hint of the perverse or sinister in his smile. It is not like the wholesome smiles of Mr. Munro, Mr. Weldon, Mr. Malakoff, or Mr. Abbot, or even the bashful but benign smile of Mr. Boyd. Mr. Verdoold has a secret. He cuts out pictures of little girls in nighties or bathing suits from department store catalogues. He must have several thousand clippings, which he hides in the basement and workshop at home, as well as in his truck. He sometimes takes off for an afternoon drive by himself or goes off in the woods. What does he do? Look at Mrs. Verdoold. She is frowning. She knows about his collection of pictures, although he doesn't know she knows. She is very worried. She wonders where he goes by himself and what he does. She agonizes over this constantly. She cannot confide in anyone. She is afraid they will lock him up. The Verdoolds have grown apart from each other. Mrs. Verdoold feels she no longer knows her husband. She has a crucifix on the wall over her bed. She prays passionately. She avoids handling phallic-shaped foods in the school kitchen.

Next to Mr. Verdoold we find Mr. A. Keating. Mr. Keating is not smiling, but this is normal for him. He actually likes his job a great deal, especially sweeping the floors and emptying the garbage. He gets moody when he isn't occupied. He owns a dozen guns and hates Communists. He is an admirer of the late Senator Joseph McCarthy. He used to hear voices but has been feeling better since his electric shock treatments. He is also on Valium. He was in the army in World War II and got shot in the ass. He believes that he and Lee Marvin would understand each other if they ever met because Lee Marvin was shot in the ass when he was in the Marines.

Mr. J. Boyd is the philosopher and thinker of the group. He is ready to discuss any subject at all, especially on working time. He bought a set of *The Great Books of the Western World* two years ago and is slowly working his way through the dialogues of Plato. He will finish the whole

JANITORS AND KITCHEN STAFF

set if he lives to the age of 178. He likes to say to Mr. Munro, "But what *is* truth?" and Mr. Munro always answers, "Aw, g'won." Mr. Boyd does a little of this and a little of that but never exerts himself. He can spend a whole day replacing a window. He believes God is trying to communicate with him by means of *Alpha-Bits* cereal and alphabet soup. He lets his mind go sort of dreamy and dips his spoon in and then looks for words in the spoon. He keeps a record of all the words he has picked up and believes a pattern of some kind will eventually reveal itself.

Mr. R. Abbot just joined the staff in September. He has to do the lousiest jobs, such as mopping up vomit and unclogging toilets, just because he's the new man, but that's okay. He is a bachelor and lives in the attic of a big, old house inhabited by an old German couple who scream at each other because they are nearly deaf. He is taking a correspondence course in electronics and electrical engineering. He would like to solve the problem of perpetual motion. He will always remember that day in grade 8 when he got 100% on a math test and the teacher praised him in front of the whole class. Mr. Abbot has a very radiant smile. But often he looks out his attic window late at night and cries bitterly. No one will ever know why. Human existence is full of such mysteries.

Now I want you to take a good look at Mr. C. Munro and his wife. You've heard it said that some couples begin to resemble each other after they've lived together a long time. Don't you think this is true of Mr. and Mrs. Munro? They've been married more than 40 years, and their habits and personalities have become so attuned to each other that they are as much in harmony as your two hands. She knows without looking how many pairs of clean socks he has in his sock drawer. They are both perfectly happy, untroubled people. The reason is that they are completely ignorant. They have no education, read nothing but the newspaper and *Reader's Digest*, and have never had a real idea in their lives. Their favorite TV shows are *Charlie's Angels*, *B.A.D. Cats*, and *B.J. and the Bear*. Intellectually they are blank slates. But don't tell them so, or they'll be hurt. They're such nice, hospitable people, always giving to any worthy cause, and their Halloween treats are a local legend. Mrs. Munro has a reputation of never making a mistake in the kitchen.



KITCHEN STAFF

Back row: Mrs. Kydd, Mrs. Munro. Front row: Mrs. Cooper, Mrs. Verdoold.

She uses no cookbooks or measuring aids, and her timer is in her head. Her eyesight is failing, but she can cook a circle around you with her eyes closed.

Mr. W. Weldon drinks prune juice every morning and is a little bit preoccupied with his bowel movements. He reads a lot of health magazines and spends a lot of money in the local health food store. He has rectal cancer but doesn't know it. He mistrusts doctors and won't go for a check-up. If he'd gone for one a couple of years ago, his cancer would have been treated easily. It has since become advanced, and he is headed for very serious surgery. He has about 18 months left. Keating, Boyd, and Malakoff usually go to Weldon's house to play poker on Saturdays or to watch hockey on his new color TV. His wife is slightly annoyed that she keeps having to dish out trays of snacks and beer to the hungry gang, but they'll pay her back tenfold when Bill is permanently disabled and is shitting through a tube coming out of his left side.

Mr. W. Malakoff once had aspirations of becoming a pro wrestler, but he found out that pro wrestling was just a racket, not a true sport of scientific Greco-Roman wrestling. He likes to build things, and he saved the school a couple of thousand dollars by building bookshelves with the wood the school bought from his brother's lumber yard. Mr. Malakoff is afflicted with Tourette's Syndrome, which causes him to make the sound "woop!" once in a while, even in the middle of sentences. This is not serious, however, and the other janitors are quite used to it. Although his name is Russian, Mr. Malakoff is only one-eighth Russian. He wishes to retire in Tennessee.

Mrs. Kydd is called "Captain Kydd" by the other ladies because she gives the orders. She does not allow the use of any spice other than salt because the rules don't allow it. She once had a Greek lady working there part-time who put some garlic on a leg of lamb, and Mrs. Kydd had her fired. (The kids were crazy about the lamb.) Mrs. Kydd experienced vicarious menstruation from a sore on her leg from the age of 16 to 24. This made her very shy, but she overcame her shyness thanks to Scientology. Now whenever she goes shopping she imagines she is in a commercial and is explaining how she shops efficiently. She also has a plan to feed the whole world by planting corn in the Amazon valley. She sent

JANITORS AND KITCHEN STAFF

it to the Ministry of Agriculture in Ottawa but has not yet received an answer.

Mrs. Cooper has her legs crossed to make sure nothing embarrassing shows in the picture. She doesn't like the looks of the photographer. She wrote the following poem, which was printed in her church's newsletter:

*This is my Father's world;
Satan has it in a swirl.
He is the prince and power of the air;
His power is everywhere.*

*This is my Father's world;
Someday Satan's works will be unfurled.
Christ is coming soon;
Satan will be doomed.*

Mrs. Cooper has never had an orgasm in her life. She is now a widow. She lies in bed at night and imagines being raped by gorillas, vampires, or Frankenstein's monster. She and Mrs. Verdoold are in complete agreement that "some of the things going on these days are disgusting." She is trying to get Mrs. Verdoold to join a local group that is seeking the removal of certain books from school libraries, but Mrs. Verdoold, for some strange reason, seems ambivalent about it.

CONFERENCE CALL

"How are sales in Toronto, Brian?"

"I is give the produces and waits if thay by. I hear about surgery and divorce and it alinimate the bussines. I dont hold nothing back I let lose the gas to avoid heart faileur and to tell no lies for the lies is bring the wrath of God wich is left to us from the sins of Isreal and the evil of man who dont have no consousness of write and wrong. I give them the produces and ask if thay by. If you dont by, you send back the produces. Hear is the names, Super-tronic 80, Specail Aleron, and Wonderbosby. Now I see we are making loud souns aroun the shoping center untill they apon this store of magazen with lady resslers, the key solution is the filosofy of holy God consousness in aplication to flesh laws in regular gene produces. I am think to hire a new secrity and have a desk for her. She is a cotten dress and not to short. I dont like for poeple to come in and threw her aroun or hold her to long. She sit on my lap and I'll going to pet her untill the hairs fall out and her heed is left, but she is good and keep her chest cover. Tomorrow we have to move to Florrida so to be more to the South sea ilands wich is were to sell the produces."

"Same situation in Calgary, Frank?"

"From the big toe on my left foot the wizard took a viper's fang which for many years had made me lame and had made a sore on the toe which came to a head and gave off a foul pus as if from a dead dog. From the main part of the little toe on my right foot, he took a handful of loathsome little worms similar to those which flies lay on livestock and which are known as drill worms. Their dimensions were two millimeters in length by one-half in diameter. These worms were indeed alive but when he took them out of my toe they died, for it was just like taking fish from water. For a long time I had been conscious that those worms were eating my toe and I saw their movements in the flesh covered only by the outer layer of skin. I used to scrape at the place to see what I could find but they seemed to disappear. So they were there for a long time. They were running out of flesh and only had the bone of my toe and the skin left

CONFERENCE CALL

but they didn't dare to break the skin and come out into the light. But as they were of diabolic origin, I was never able to see or take them out before. When he finished taking out these evil things, he sponged my toe with a perfumed alcohol mixture but I am not sure since he was not inclined to reveal any part of what he was doing. The burning sensations and the pain which I felt were frightful. I wanted to run and shout with pain but I had to forbear and conduct myself like a man. I said before that the practitioners of the science of evil are masters of their trade and rely on all the tools appropriate to their work."

"Dennis, would your boys in San Francisco agree?"

"Small furry things hover outside and disturb our sleep. Our feet hurt. B-movies are sapping our incentive. Slogans make us nauseous. Our sentences have broken down in which to of by gothically binky bunky of ever and ever was the which blah blah went the Annual Report. Girls who had good pants now squeeze cheesies from their faces. Our meats surge with bulbous yearnings. We hunger for beasts that creep. We lost our strategies for success on the subway, where young criminals will find them. Our vestigial organs are growing again. Supervisor Ignacio stands at the window, flapping his arms and ululating, 'KOOCHOONGA! KOOCHOONGA! MOKTA WOKTA YO-YO HEADS!' Willard wishes to rename all the elements. The streets are full of teenage cars playing dog music. Ticks are blocking traffic on the Bearway. There was a little mouse, but we forgot. Oh, if they knew what we do with our feces! They would shave our heads and rend our clothes. 'Unclean! Unclean!' you would hear us cry. Could we please be eleven again and go shopping for school supplies? We sent our brave young rookies into the jungle to conjugate irregular verbs. Now we are afraid to sleep for fear that we will awaken with misshapen heads. Oh, the graphs, they smell, and it's sad. We can see bad men coming now and our doors just fell down. Goodbye, goodbye. Observe our new tires as we drive away."

BUCKY'S BIG DAY

He has spent an eternity driving through her neighborhood looking for her house. It is nighttime. He can hardly see because the street lights are off. The houses and streets have all been rearranged. Familiar landmarks are missing or out of place. He drives around the block again and again, certain that her house must be there somewhere, and with each circuit his anxiety grows. He fears that this neighborhood is not hers but merely resembles hers, or that she herself has long since moved away without telling him. Deep down he knows that if he does not get to her soon he will surely die. Finally he finds her house. The outside lights are off. He is filled with a dread that she is not there, or that she will not answer, or that if she does answer she will somehow be different. Perhaps she will not remember him after so many years. He is trembling as he goes to the front door. He looks for the door bell, but it has disappeared. He tries the door. It is unlocked. Inside, the house is very dim. He walks inside to her bedroom. The door is ajar. The light is on. He smells her perfume. He hopes she will recognize him. He takes off his clothes before entering the room. He wants to make love to her. He goes into the room. Her back is turned to him. She is wearing her bra and panties. She turns around and looks at him with surprise. "Hi, it's me," he says. She smiles for a second, and then a look of disgust comes over her. He suddenly feels that he has no prick. He looks down to see if his prick is there...and his head falls off! "I HAVE NO HEAD! I HAVE NO HEAD!..."

"I HAVE NO HEAD! I HAVE NO HEAD!" Bucky awakes. He feels drenched with sweat. Same goddamn thing again!

"What time do you have to be there?" asks his mother, putting his breakfast before him.

"Four o'clock." He sips his coffee. "I'm not too hungry."

"Eat. Your blood sugar will go down and you won't be able to concentrate."

"I can concentrate on six lousy words, for chrissake."

"Let me hear you say them."

"Not now."

"Come on, I want to hear you say them."

"I don't feel like it, Ma."

"Oh, come on. Let me hear it."

He sighs. "Bet the twin blades clog up."

"Not like that. Do it good."

He forces an idiotic grin and exclaims, "BET THE TWIN

BLADES CLOG UP!"

"That's good! Your father would love to see that!"

"Give me a break."

"You'll go see him today, okay? You can take him some cookies."

"He was eating his own shit the other day, and you're going to waste cookies on him?"

"Don't be like that. After all, it's not his fault."

After his mother leaves for work, Bucky calls his new girl at her office. "Hi, it's me...*Bucky*, who do you think? ...Can you talk for a minute?...I'm sorry about the other night...No, really...I shouldn't have...I'm sorry...What?... Okay, I realize that, but it's just the way it is with me. I mean, some guys need, um...It takes a period of adjustment, that's all...Why can't you help me out?...That's not it at all. I mean, if I need it, I...If you would just... Yeah, well maybe I'm getting sick and tired too...Not you, just your attitude...What do you mean, abnormal?...How can you say that to me?...No, *you're* hurting *me* worse than *I'm* hurting *you*...Because you didn't give me a chance, that's why, goddammit!...Okay, okay, let's not argue. Can I come over tonight?...Oh, come on...Come on, that's no excuse. You can do that some other time...Come on, let me come over ...So what?...Come on...What a lot of...Come on, have a heart, will you?...I understand...I swear it, I promise... No, really, I mean it this time...I understand that...Come on, how about it then?...Okay, eight o'clock...Don't worry, I won't be...Listen, I--" She has hung up. Bucky rubs his forehead and eyes slowly. He hates this day already.

Graeme is in the back of the bus in the last seat by the window. The bus is packed. No one is talking. Thank God for the sound of the motor to fill our emptiness. Thank God for newspapers we can hide our desperate faces

BUCKY'S BIG DAY

behind and occupy our minds with. If we are riding on a crowded bus in the morning and reading a newspaper, then hooray for us. We are normal. The world goes on normally, and we are of and in the world, right where we should be. We are riding to a familiar place of work, a place where we have familiar things to do. We have familiar chairs to sit on. We have familiar phones to talk into, familiar voices to talk to. Thank God for all these things. Thank God for Dynamic Media Communications, Limited.

Graeme discreetly turns to the classified ad section. He is nervous. He screens himself off with half the paper from the person next to him. He scans the personal column and locates his ad:

LESMILL ROAD, YORK MILLS
"95 Bus" Newspaper

Does this mean anything to you? If it does, maybe you are the tall girl I am looking for. I am the tall guy who bought the newspaper in front of you once about one and a half years ago. We used to be on the same bus at around 7:45 a.m. I believe you were disappointed in my buying that paper. You must know I did it because I agreed with its political editorial at the time, not because I enjoyed it's rather low intellectual level. I haven't been able to forgive myself for not approaching you before, I believe we could have an unusually rewarding relationship. Write me: Box 2459, The Globe.

He cringes when he sees "it's" instead of "its" and a comma instead of a period after "before." He hopes it will not ruin his chances of finding her. She *must* know that newspapers often make mistakes.

He does not even notice the news item on the front page concerning the recent wave of murders. The dismembered bodies of young girls continue to turn up in the parks.

Mr. Hayman, President of Dynamic Media Communications,

Limited, is in his office. It is early. The switchboard operator has not even arrived yet. This is the time of day he likes best. He is undisturbed. He can focus his thoughts creatively, efficiently, *dynamically*. Only Sandra, his secretary, is in. She is making his coffee.

Mr. Hayman writes in a small diary as follows: "*Killed yesterday a young girl; it was fine and hot.*" He places the diary in the bottom drawer of his desk and locks it. He calls for Sandra. She comes in with his coffee and a large, sealed manila envelope. She is a trifle nervous today, or perhaps excited. She sets the coffee before him and the envelope next to it. He opens the envelope and takes out a pair of Sandra's soiled panties.

"How many days did you wear it?"

"F-four...four days."

"Okay." He puts the panties into his inside jacket pocket. From the other pocket he takes out a small plastic vial about half-full of thick, milky-white fluid. "Here. Go enjoy yourself."

She takes it from him with a nervous, fleeting smile and starts to leave.

"Oh, just one more thing, before I forget."

"Yes?"

"The word 'Limited' in our name is never to be abbreviated. *Never.*" His gaze is directed at her breasts.

"Yes, sir, I'll make sure from now on." She leaves and goes into the ladies' room.

Neil is standing before the bathroom mirror. He is so grateful to be doing the Schick Ultrex commercial that he will even *shave* with a Schick Ultrex today. He will shave those whiskers right off with a brand new Schick Ultrex, yes-siree. Then he will go out to the ball field in his baseball uniform. He will be a catcher. He will catch a ball, then look into the camera and say, "Does it have a pivoting head?" *Of course it has a pivoting head! Why, this is the Schick Ultrex!* And Bucky will be the hockey player and say something about twin blades. *He didn't want to say my line, for some reason. He said, 'You take that one. I like the other one.'* Well, it's okay by me. *Yessiree, the agency won't be sorry they gave the job to Neil and Bucky. Get ready for big, fat residual cheques!* He takes in at a glance the

shabby bathroom with its moldy walls, cobwebs, leaky plumbing, and crumbling plaster. *Oh, God, thank you for this job! No more poor living. It's big TV money for Neil from now on!* Now for a nice hot shave, Neil. And I mean a *hot* shave, with really *hot* cream. And it's off with those whiskers with a new Schick Ultrex. Ah, feel that pivoting head!

Walter, the youngest writer at Dynamic, once wrote to Sandra while he was on vacation. He had been with Dynamic less than a year and was eating his heart out over her. Many times he had tried to tell her of his love, but his courage would fail him at the crucial moment. After all, how could a 24-year-old man hope to be taken seriously by a 36-year-old woman? He could only express himself in a letter sent from a great distance. It was a letter full of earnest desire, full of the deepest, purest affection, a letter not merely expressing all that she meant to him but also all that he hoped to achieve, all that he hoped to be in his lifetime. Unfortunately, the letter was destroyed by its recipient and is lost to us forever.

Upon his return from his vacation, Sandra took the first opportunity to speak to Walter -- in the parking lot. "That letter you wrote to me," she began, looking pained.

"Yes?" he said, filled with tension.

"Don't ever write me a letter like that again."

"What?"

"It made me cry. I had my baby niece with me and I was crying and I couldn't explain to her why I was crying."

"I meant everything I said."

"I know you did, but I'm sorry, it just can't work." She held back her tears.

"I thought, well...I just thought..."

"Walter, you're a nice guy, but it's just impossible. I can't tell you why. You just have to accept it." She walked away quickly, leaving him there to stare at her in pain and adoration.

I will never love a woman again, thought Walter. I will throw myself into my work. I will create. I will be the writer I know I can be.

That very night Walter wrote the now-famous jingle for Yakamoto Wine:

BUCKY'S BIG DAY

Yakamoto Wine
Yakamoto Wine
Yakamoto Wine
Yakamoto Wine
Ya-ka-mo-to
Ya-ka-mo-to
Yakamoto Wine
Yakamoto Wine

"I'm here to see my father," says Bucky to the head nurse.

"He's in the north lounge, I think. What do you have there?"

"Some cookies from home."

She sighs. "Go easy on the cookies from now on, okay? He has to watch what he eats."

"Okay." *It's better than shit, you stupid bitch!*

"Fruit is better."

"Okay, next time." *Try a banana up your ass, sister!*
He heads to the north lounge. He knows he will find his father on the sofa. He hopes the fly of his pajamas will be buttoned this time.

He nods at two attendants and a nurse in the hall. He walks into the north lounge. The dozen or so pairs of eyes fasten on the bag of cookies. He sits on the edge of the sofa where his father is lying down. His fly is wide open. He does not notice Bucky at first. His hands are cupped behind his ears. His eyes are darting about frantically.

"Turn off that Nigger music!" exclaims Leo, a bald, middle-aged man seated in an armchair, staring straight ahead at nothing. There is no music.

Bucky puts the cookies on his father's chest. "Hi, Dad. Here's some cookies." No reaction from his father. "Dad...Dad..." He jostles him a bit.

His father looks at him with alarm. "They're going to kill me."

"Who is?"

"The voices. *Devils'* voices!"

"There's no voices, Dad. I brought you some cookies."

"Turn off that Nigger music!" exclaims Leo.

"They're going to kill me," says his father. "Today. I heard them talking." He gestures toward the wall. "Over

there." Bucky looks. "They're talking now. Do you hear them?"

"There's nothing, Dad. You're imagining it."

His father grasps Bucky's arm. "They're in there, Steven. They're in there right now."

"It's Bucky, not Steven, Dad. In where?"

"In the radiator."

"The radiator?"

"The devils are hiding in the radiator. They're in control of this place."

"Turn off that Nigger music!" growls Leo.

"Oh, shut up, Leo!" snaps Bucky. His father starts to lift himself up. Bucky grabs the cookies before they fall.

"Listen, Steven, they're taking me to the plates!"

"Bucky, not Steven, Dad. Steven's dead. What plates?"

His father looks at him in puzzlement for a moment.

"The big metal plates that they crush people in."

"There's no plates, believe me."

"I'm next, I tell you! They're going to put me in the plates!"

"Dad, there's no plates, listen to me! You've got to take it easy and take your medication. The doctors are taking care of you."

"Only the gold socks can save me." He kicks his slippers off. Bucky sees that his father is wearing dingy gold socks. "But when they get dirty the gold wears out and loses its power."

"Jesus."

"Bring me some more, okay, Steven?" He grabs Bucky's sleeve. "Don't let them kill your father."

Bucky looks into his father's pleading eyes. "Sure. Okay."

His father sits up, brows creased. "Listen!"

"There's nothing, Dad."

"I know."

"That's good, Dad. Finally."

"They stopped."

Bucky opens the bag of cookies. "Mom sent these."

His father looks in the bag cautiously, picks up a cookie, examines it closely, then puts it back. He lies down again. "What are you doing? Are you working?"

"Yeah, I've got a job to do today. A commercial."

BUCKY'S BIG DAY

"Commercial?"

"For TV."

"TV?" His father grimaces. "That's no kind of work for a nice boy like you."

"Well, it's a start. If it works out, I'll get more work."

His father raises himself on one elbow and grasps Bucky's arm again. "If you need work, go see Moe." Bucky rubs his forehead and turns away in disgust. His father pulls him back gently. "Tell him I sent you. Moe will do it for me."

"Moe, eh? You want me to go see Moe?"

"Sure, he was here just the other day. He said, 'Tell Steven to come and see me if he needs a job.'"

God! He thinks Moe came to see him!

"Moe's a real swell--"

"Goddammit, Moe's dead and I'm Bucky, not Steven!"

"Whahh?" His father's face fills with terror. "What did you say?"

"Nothing."

"Tell me."

"Forget it."

"Tell me!"

Bucky takes a deep breath, then lets it out, his eye taking in the familiar faces and furniture of the lounge. "I'm Bucky, not Steven."

His father stares at him intently. "Bucky?...Bucky?...Bucky?..." He shakes his head. "You changed your name to Bucky?"

Leo stands up suddenly. "HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU TO TURN OFF THAT NIGGER MUSIC!"

Sandra is sitting in the ladies' room. She opens her pocket book and reaches for a bunch of pamphlets held by a rubber band (*I Am Not Going To A Christless Grave*). From the middle of the stack she extracts a photo cut out of a porno magazine, showing porno film star John Holmes feeding his stiff cock to a gorgeous brunette. Sandra begins massaging her clit when she hears the door open. Amy, the production assistant for the Schick project, gets into the adjacent stall. Rustle of panties. Embarrassed coughing.

"Sandra, are you okay?"

"Yes, why?"

"You looked upset a minute ago."

"That's funny. I thought *you* looked upset this morning."

Oh, God, thinks Amy. *Is it that obvious?* "Oh, it's nothing, really. But what about you?"

"I wasn't really upset before. I was sort of excited and confused," says Sandra.

"What about?"

"I don't want you to laugh at me or think I'm crazy."

"I won't."

"Yes, you will."

"No, I won't. I promise."

"Well..." Long pause. "It was the yogurt I was eating."

"Uh huh."

"Blueberry yogurt."

"Uh huh."

"I was stirring it, like, you know, like usual, not thinking about it."

"Uh huh."

"And when I looked into it, I saw something."

Amy gasps. "Oh, no, not a bug or something!"

"No, no. I saw...a face. The blueberries made a face ...Um..."

"Go on."

"It was the face of Jesus."

"Oh, no! You mean it?"

"I swear to you on my mother's grave."

"Oh, my God. Is it still there?"

"No, I stirred it up again and ate it."

"Oh, too bad. I would've liked to see it."

"I think it was a sign from God."

"A sign of what?"

"I don't know, but it was a sign." She reaches for some tissue to wipe her tears. "Now you tell me yours."

"My what?"

"What was bothering you. I told you mine, now you tell me yours."

"It's nothing, really. Just a financial problem. It's not important." How could Amy possibly tell Sandra what had happened the night before? How could any human being

understand? She could never, never, *never* tell it to anyone, except possibly her analyst. And to think that it was going on all those years without her knowing!

She had gone to her mother's house very late after trying to get her on the phone. Why didn't she answer? Had she had an accident? Was she sick? Amy's stomach churned with anxiety as she pulled into the driveway. All the lights were out, even the light over the front door. Something was definitely wrong. She rang the bell several times. Finally she decided to let herself in with her duplicate key. "Mother?" she called, turning on the light in the foyer. Then she heard what sounded like a voice coming from the basement -- an *unnatural* voice. *Oh, God, what's going on?* She walked as softly as possible through the house to the door of the basement. She could hear gasps, guttural voices, and smacking sounds! Amy was shaking as she opened the basement door ever so delicately. She could hear the voices clearly now.

"UNNGH!" *Swack!* "UNNGH!" *Swack!* "WHIP ME, GIRL! WHIP ME!" *Swack!*

"I'll whip your ass, you big stud cock!" *Swack!* "You love it, you cock!" *Swack!* "I'll whip your asshole!" *Swack!*

"UNNGH!" *Swack!* "WHIP ME! WHIP ME HARDER!"

Amy felt like fainting. She could hardly see for the tears in her eyes. She stepped down the stairs so fearfully that she almost tripped. Then she saw it! *Oh, God! Oh, God!* "MOTHER!" she shrieked, as the old lady froze in shock, whip suspended over her shoulder. She was clad in a leather corset and spike-heeled boots. The chubby teenage boy looked at Amy and tugged at the ropes that bound him to the beams. "It's a game! We're just playing around!" he exclaimed in panic.

"MOTHER!" cried Amy, coming down the stairs. "WHAT ARE YOU DOING?"

The old lady dropped the whip and burst into tears. Amy grabbed her by the shoulders. Her mother looked up at her, crying profusely. "They pay me! They pay me! I needed the money!" She buried her head in Amy's bosom. "How do you think I put you through university?"

Frankie, the video technician, is on the subway. He is

sweating heavily. The case he is holding on to in such an overly-protective manner is *not* full of sound equipment. It contains over fifty thousand dollars from his father's safe. He can't get his mind off his father's last look -- a look of horror and disbelief. The body is in the basement, where it won't be found for at least a day. He wouldn't have done it had Robbie not been so desperate. *"They'll kill me if I don't come up with sixteen thousand by next week! They're not kidding, Frankie! They'll really do it! You've got to help me!"* And how could Frankie say no to his only true friend and lover, the one man who had made him feel loved and needed? *To never feel that body again...to lose that sweet ass...No! I'll kill the old man! I'll kill that rotten bastard! He's always got a big wad in the safe.*

Now freedom for Robbie was only hours away. They'd have to do that job for Dynamic, then Robbie could take the money, pay his debt, and stash the rest. They'd have to hang around a while in order not to arouse suspicion. Then when it had blown over they could leave town and go to New York or L.A.

A policeman enters the train. Frankie feels sick for a moment, then makes a conscious effort to look calm. The policeman turns his back to him. *I'll get through this. I'll get through this.*

Across the aisle a young man with a crew cut is absorbed in reading *The Holy Book of Adolf Hitler*.

A few seats away a man in a three-piece charcoal-grey suit with pin stripes has just extracted a huge gob of snot from his nose while hiding behind his *Wall Street Journal*. When he's sure no one is looking he will eat the snot.

Under Frankie's right foot is a scrap of paper evidently torn from a larger piece. It is soiled with the print of the tread of Frankie's running shoe. It contains these words penned in careful script:

*Ascension from the deep!
O dark escape into the stir and noise!
Over what awful emptiness I poise
In dangerous sleep!*

*O vast abyss of fright!
Salted eternity's chaotic sea,*

BUCKY'S BIG DAY

*Wherein I lose my frail identity
Night after night!*

*My being smells of death.
'I might have never come to be!' I cried.
The gulf of black negation swirling wide
Mocks at my breath.*

Letter hidden by Neil in a chest of drawers in the Pine Motel, Houston, Texas:

Sept. 14, 1973

I have to go and get my plane in a couple of hours. I just wanted to leave this behind. I don't know if anyone will find it.

I thought I had a job waiting for me here. I was told over the phone that I had the job and I could come right down. I was supposed to start shortly after Labour Day. But when I arrived the boss was out in the country and nobody knew anything about my being hired. But the secretary showed me around and introduced me to a few people and told them I'd be going to work there soon. Everyone was very friendly. I felt really great. I thought, I have a new job and all these new friends. It's going to be great. I was staying at the Warwick Hotel, which is very expensive, but I thought I'd be working very soon. I kept calling in every day to ask if the boss was back, and they said no. They didn't know when he'd be back. At first they were polite, then they started to act kind of annoyed that I kept calling. I thought something was wrong so finally I went in and found out that the boss, Mr. Oak, had been back the whole time. I couldn't believe it. Then he said he had to give my job to a veteran who just came back from Vietnam, but if I stuck around something might turn up for me.

I had to move to this place because my money was running out. I thought I'd have a job pretty soon. I was a fool. I should have realised there was no job. They said they'd call me, not to call them. You know what that means.

I haven't slept well for days. There are ants coming in under the door. I poured some water on them but that

BUCKY'S BIG DAY

didn't do any good. It's too hot outside and inside it's only a little bit cool. The air conditioner is noisy. I tried to read a book. After I finished it I couldn't remember any of it except it was a space story.

I went to the dirty movies but for some reason I felt sad afterwards.

On Wednesday I went to a hamburger place down the street, and a girl shared a table with me outside. Her name was Eva. We got to talking and I liked her a lot and she seemed to like me. I thought this could be my first girlfriend in Houston. She agreed to meet me there Thursday at 7 p.m. I said, "You promise you'll be there?" and she said yes. "You really promise?" I asked, and she said she promised. I told her if she stood me up I'd be heartbroken. I said it in a joking way although I really meant it. She said she was a woman of her word. I couldn't help it but I even asked her again later a couple of times if she really would be there, and she smiled and said definitely. She said I should trust her. So the next day I went there early and waited. I felt so happy because I felt I had a reason to be there, to meet Eva. I felt I belonged in this city and I wasn't alone. At 7 p.m. she wasn't there. I waited and waited. I was sure she would show up because she promised so many times. I started to get very hungry but I didn't want to eat without her. Then I lost my appetite when I thought she might not show up. Finally I went to get a coffee and the coloured lady inside asked if I was waiting for somebody. I said no. I should have come back to the motel right away but I kept thinking she might get there the minute after I leave, but if she finds me there she'll appreciate it all the more that I waited. It was almost 10 and the sky still had some light in it. It was a very deep blue-green near the horizon. I kept watching the cars go by. Nobody paid any attention to me. I didn't want them to. I didn't want anyone to sit down at my table and try to make conversation. Finally I decided to walk back to the motel but I kept turning around to see if she was just arriving. I wondered whether I should go to the movies again or what I should do but I came straight back to the motel. Why this had to happen to me I don't know.

I didn't sleep last night except maybe an hour or so, but I guess I will sleep a little on the plane. My name is

Neil White, as if anybody cares, and I am going back home. I will never come back to Houston again as long as I live. I don't know what kind of person will find this or if he or she will care, but I am leaving it hidden here just to show that I was here.

Montreal Man Found Dead In Woods

Sherbrooke, Que. (CP) -- The body of a man found shot to death near Bury has been identified as Walter Freud, a Montreal aircraft designer. His body was found by his wife on land they owned. Coroner Michel Durand said that Freud died of a single bullet wound but that it was impossible to determine whether the shooting was accidental or deliberate. Freud was known as a strict pacifist and political activist who was forced to flee South Africa because of his anti-apartheid activities. He was a distant relative of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud.

"Exactly, Bob. And just as the trend goes from cheek-to-cheek dancing to dancing far apart--"

"The twist--"

"Yeah, uh, we see the breakdown of the family and of morals generally."

"Right, right. It's the same factor of social cohesion on the microscopic level of the dance and the macroscopic level of social structures."

"And then the new dance forms come along and what happens? Fragmentation. Alienation."

"Solipsism."

"Sure, why not? I ask you, is it any accident that the divorce rates began to skyrocket just as the twist started to get big?"

"No, it's no accident. Take that study done at Ohio State--"

"Ohio Wesleyan."

"I'm sure it was Ohio State."

"I'm sure it was Ohio Wesleyan, Bob--"

Victor turns off the car radio. "It was an accident,"

he says out loud. *It was an accident. He looked like a bear. That's just what he looked like -- a bear. I got scared and I shot him. When I saw it was a man, I ran away. Anyone would have done the same thing. What should I do, hang around and get charged with murder or something almost as bad? I'd be ruined. Oh, God, the things that happen to people. The things that happen. Just give me a chance to make up for it by doing good work for my company.*

The advertising director of Schick is on his way to the arena to watch the end of the filming for the new commercial. He will congratulate the Dynamic agency for a job well done. He will give free shavers to everyone. He will make the Schick Ultrex the hottest shaver on the market. It'll mean a vice-presidency for sure. *Please, God, I'll be good from now on. Make sure they never find out.*

Meanwhile, Bucky is waiting in the arena. He is already dressed in his hockey uniform but is still wearing his sneakers. *Bet the twin blades clog up. Bet the twin blades clog up. See her tonight at eight. Tonight at eight.*

The only other person present is Fred, the custodian. "I'm really a scientist, you know," he says.

"Oh, yeah?"

"Yep. I'm way ahead of the other scientists. I invented an atomic bomb that doesn't make pollution. I sent the plans to the government and told them they could use it."

"And did they?"

"I never heard from them, so I assume they did."

If it takes more than two takes, no, three takes, it won't work out tonight.

"I invented plenty of things. I invented an antenna for drawing energy right out of the air. Someday you'll run your car on it."

It's tonight or never. I wonder if she loves me.

"I know things about the moon nobody else knows. I told the astronauts where to land. I know because I can see things on the bottom of lakes that have the same shape as parts of the moon. The lakes are connected with the moon and follow the same laws."

What good is it to make it big on TV if she doesn't love me? I'd rather have her than money.

"I designed a pyramid that you can use to levitate. It works on anti-gravity. I was going to bring one in to the

C.B.C. and demonstrate it on television, but they were pressured by the airlines not to because it would make airplanes obsolete."

Something will go wrong, I know it. No matter how much I psych myself up, something will go wrong. Some little thing.

"I have a rod at home that can point to where oil is underground. I sent one like it to a big oil company a long time ago, and they been finding oil ever since. I figure they owe me about a hundred and thirty billion dollars."

I should have told her I loved her. It's too late. Her mind is set against me. If I could only go back in the past and change things. I could say or do something different.

"The UFO's have a master plan to evacuate a hundred and fifty people before World War Three starts, and I expect to be one of them. I know they have their eye on me. They won't be sorry, I'll tell you that."

If the second hand is touching an even number when I look, I'm going to lose her. He looks at the clock. It is four-twenty. The second hand is on the twelve.

"Where are your friends?" asks Fred.

"I don't know. They told me four o'clock."

"I was actually *on* the moon, you know. You want to hear about it?"

"I think I'll go outside and see if they're coming."

Bucky walks out to the parking lot. There is a Lincoln at the far end near the hedge that he didn't see before. He walks toward the car. There is no one in it. He hears a noise coming from the other side of the car, right by the hedge. Alarmed, he runs up and looks. There is Mr. Hayman on his knees, leaning over what appears to be a Barbie doll. His cock is out, and he is jerking himself vigorously while chewing on a pair of ladies' panties.

"Jesus!" exclaims Bucky, turning away in disgust.

"Hey! It's a joke! It's nothing!" Hayman calls after him, zipping himself up. "Hey, kid, don't say anything! I'll pay you!"

Bucky is heading for the door. Just then Victor's car pulls in. Victor parks by the door and gets out.

"I've had it with this job," says Bucky.

Victor grabs his arm. "Hey, what's the matter?"

Bucky looks back toward Hayman, who is now walking toward them with forced calm, smiling, affecting a pleasant nonchalance. "That guy's a pervert," he says to Victor.

"A pervert?" Victor grabs Bucky's sweater with both hands. "A pervert?" he snarls, looking daggers into Bucky's eyes. "Let me tell you something, young fellow! THAT'S THE BEST DAMN CREATIVE AD PRODUCER IN THE BUSINESS!"

Bucky is wearing his skates. He is leaning against the wall of the rink waiting for the others to get set up. Amy and Graeme are talking to each other. Victor and Hayman are sitting in the seats talking privately. They both look serious. Now Victor says something that makes Hayman chuckle. He offers Victor a big cigar and takes one out for himself too. Now they look at Bucky. Robbie is setting his sound level as Walter repeats, "Bet the twin blades clog up! Bet the twin blades clog up! Bet the twin blades clog up!" He hopes Amy notices the maturity in his voice.

Fred is leaning over the wall where Bucky is standing. "I really was on the moon, you know."

"Yeah, I know," replies Bucky, skating away from him, head down, brooding.

Victor watches him glide gracefully around. Then something goes *Click* inside of Victor. His eyes caress Bucky.

After Walter has walked away, Frankie says to Robbie in a low voice, "I got you the money."

"Did you...did you do what you said you'd do?"

Frankie nods.

"Where is it?"

"It's in a locker in the subway."

"Why didn't you say so before?"

Frankie looks around him at the others. "Didn't have the chance."

Hayman is now walking out on the ice. He goes over to Bucky and turns him around so that their backs are to the others. "I'll pay you a hundred bucks if you keep your mouth shut. Otherwise you'll never work in this city again."

"Go to hell."

Hayman walks back to his seat. Graeme goes out to show Bucky his starting mark. Then he rejoins the others behind the camera. "Everybody set?" Yes, everybody is set. "Okay, let's give it a go."

Got to be three takes or less, or I lose her, thinks Bucky.

"Take one," says Amy, signalling Bucky.

Bucky gathers speed, skates toward the camera, stops short, and says, "Bet the twin blades clog up!"

"Cut!" says Graeme. "You forgot to smile. And move a little faster."

Bucky skates slowly back to his mark, banging his stick on the ice.

Walter has been standing behind Amy, his eyes covering every inch of her. *This is the woman who can make me happy. I should have realized it before. Maybe if I write her the right letter with the right words I'll get to lie between those legs someday. Can't wait to go on vacation so I can write to her!*

Amy signals Bucky. "Take two."

Bucky accelerates, curves slightly off center, and says, "Bet the twin blades clog up!"

"No good, it's off center," says Frankie.

"Cut!" says Graeme. "Your spot's right there." He points, but Bucky is already skating away, head down, silently cursing. He returns to his mark.

"Try it again. Okay, ready? Take three."

This time he moves with perfect speed and position, smiles handsomely, and says, "Bet the tin blades--*Oh, shit!*"

"Cut! *Twin blades*, Bucky. *Twin blades.*"

That's it. I'm over the limit.

The twenty-eighth take is the print. Bucky is sitting down, taking his skates off wearily, face drawn with sorrow. Amy sits down next to him, covering her bosom with her clipboard. "I'm sorry we were late."

"It's okay."

She sits up very straight on the edge of the seat, clasping her clipboard firmly. "We were late because something happened." Hayman comes up behind them, looking sternly at Bucky.

Bucky looks at him, then at her. "What happened?"

"We had to get a replacement at the last minute for your friend Neil," she says.

"Why?"

Amy's lips are compressed with tension. "Neil had an

accident."

"An accident? Oh, shit! What happened?"

She puts her hand on his arm. "He's dead."

"DEAD? NEIL'S DEAD?" He jumps to his feet.

"A can of shaving cream exploded by his head," says Hayman coldly. "Practically blew his head right off."

"Jesus, Peter!" snaps Amy.

In the locker room Bucky is changing his clothes, shaking his head and cursing. Victor has followed him in. His eyes are glued to Bucky's ass and crotch. *He's vulnerable now. Maybe I have a chance.* "Hey, kid, I'm sorry." Bucky ignores him and continues to dress. "I'm sorry about your friend. What a terrible thing." He puts his hand on Bucky's shoulder. "And I'm sorry I roughed you up before." *I'll take you home and comfort you. I understand about death. I'll take you to bed and you'll be grateful.*

"Forget it."

"Listen, why don't you have a drink with me and calm down. You'll feel better."

"Sorry, I have to go somewhere." He reaches for his jacket.

"Aw, come on, it'll do you good. One little drink. Come on, kid, what do you say?"

"I have to go." Bucky brushes past him and heads for his car.

Oh friend, when we are gone, who will fill the world with thoughts of remembrance for us? Will any silent howl of loss follow our images through the succession of days and nights, hoping to seize upon some little proof of our existence?

The sky is a very deep blue with a fading promise of green upon the horizon as Bucky drives on the wide highway. He drives nowhere in particular. He drives with the window open to scatter his thoughts upon the earth -- ineffable thoughts spewing out of a mad inner machine.

Neil is gone. Neil is dead. Neil is dead without a head.

He turns on the radio. There ought to be some news about it, but there is none. Doesn't anyone know? Doesn't anyone care that a human being has been ripped out of the

world? Whichever one of them became famous first would help the other: that was the promise sealed with a clink of glasses.

Red tail lights in front, white headlights whizzing past, yellowish lights above on both sides, all punctuating a cold desolation. He sees the contours of the city as those of his heart turned inside out. Across the city and out into the country, following one particular car for no reason, then back when he feels he has gone too far.

First he is hungry. Then he is not hungry. Then he feels sick. Feeling dizzy, he pulls into the empty parking lot of a school. Here he will shut his eyes and try to rest. Here he will try to shut down the mad machine. He thinks of skating around and around in a silent, empty rink. Around and around he goes, and before very long he is on the fine edge of sleep...

He is aroused by a sound. He looks and sees a dog pawing at a garbage bag nearby. Instantly a terrible dread floods through him. Any second the bag will be ripped open and the guts will come falling out to be picked at and scattered.

He looks around and realizes suddenly that he is not far from where she lives! He must get to her at once, before it is too late! He starts his car and heads toward her street. Coming from an unaccustomed direction, he makes a wrong turn. Or *is* it a wrong turn? The street looks familiar, yet in this darkness it is hard to make things out. He drives on, thinking to intercept a main street. He looks about frantically. He is lost! A little gasp of panic escapes his lips. He tries to steady himself. *I've got to get to her! That house is like hers. No, it's different... Those trees...No, wrong ones...What's that sign doing there?* Sweat pours out of him. *Where the hell is her house?* He goes around an impossibly long, irregularly-shaped block, searching for something familiar. The street lights seem so dim. Around another block and another, and suddenly he sees it. The lights are out! *But she knew I was coming! It can't be that late!*

He gets out of the car, thinking only that he must go to her door, that he must get through it. The house looks so empty -- almost as though it were unoccupied. He is oblivious to everything except the door, whose panels have

taken on the unnatural appearance of a stern face with its eyes closed. He smells a smell like rotting leaves. He looks for the door bell but can't see it. He strains to find it through watery eyes and finally does. The little light in the door bell is out.

From the very depths of his soul he begins to tremble. *Oh, God, make her be here! Make her be here!* He presses the door bell and releases it. There is no sound. The tremor sweeps through his body and shakes him violently. Alone in the night, Bucky breaks into sobs and holds his head with both hands.

WHAT THE ARRIVAL OF NEW YORK STATE ONIONS MEANT TO ME

There are things that are too hard to explain to an uncomprehending world. There is too much blah-blah and traffic, and I am even led to question the reliability of words themselves.

My longing begins in the supermarket ads, where I have followed the progress of the world, the passing of solstices and equinoxes being represented by gigantic quantities of melons and asparagus suddenly appearing. You could not deduce such changes from the religion column or other forms of empiricism.

Who is as brave as I and will admit his life has seemed empty and meaningless for days, perhaps weeks? The cause is this and that and I don't know. But even feeling this way is a sign of fullness and meaning. A rationalist will see this at once.

Before Sandra and the kids went off the edge of Perce' Rock on a Ski-Doo, nothing had mattered much. Their swift passage caused me to reflect and, moreover, to study the influx of produce diligently.

Now I understood. They would not admit it, but Brooklyn and Queens had long felt guilty about eating canned onions from Guatemala. And Manhattan resented the "transit onions" grown inside of tractor-trailers with artificial light, which perpetually traveled the Major Deegan Expressway and other arteries around the heart of the city. This was not what God had intended.

There had been no native state onions for a long time, as the evidence clearly showed. Inquiries to the A&P went unanswered. Letters to the editor were not published. What a shame for a state that had given bargemen an Erie Canal and a song to sing while on it (*I've got a mule, her name is Sal, fifteen miles on the Erie Canal*). But these things have passed.

So much had changed. I returned to the beloved Goose Pond of my childhood, but the geese had died of the falseness of the world. I looked up in the clouds. There were plot, structure and characterization flying away in a

perfect V. I jumped but could not reach them.

The Doctor had said I was afflicted with delusions of smallness, that I was liable to disappear down a punctuation mark or a pause between stanzas. He advised me not to read or sing.

Nevertheless, I scanned the consumer pages until my attention was caught by a coded message which meant: *New York State Onions Coming*. The farmers expressed relief to wring them from the ground, for this would be the last crop before the Great Fog. After that, there would be forgetfulness and a loss of values.

I waited all night for the truck to pull into the terminal -- not with transit onions but the real thing. Its driver would be sad and unshaven, and he would be thinking about bocci and Florida. When the door of the truck opened, the sight of the onions would make me weep. Oh, that I could become such an onion and have meaning! In the layers of my skin I would own the geological and mystical histories of the world. Here were truth and love and all such things as to make one glad to be alive or to die. A soul-less world would never understand.

Shyly, the sun made pink around the tall buildings and the stars went into hiding. The world was coming out to work and eat. I took several of these last true onions and put them in my pockets. I was at one with them -- as I'm sure they felt toward me -- alone and together, enduring and complete, unto eternity, unto infinity, to be closeted away in a cool, dry place and sprout our little shoots in peace.

Also by Crad Kilodney

Mental Cases (Lowlands Review, 1978)

World Under Anaesthesia (Charnel House, 1979)

Gainfully Employed In Limbo (Charnel House, 1980)

Lightning Struck My Dick (Virgo Press, 1980)

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To receive announcements of new publications, send your name and address to the author, and you will be put on the mailing list.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Crad Kilodney was born in Jamaica, New York, in 1948 and moved to Canada in 1973. After completing a degree in astronomy at the University of Michigan, he abandoned his scientific career to become a writer. His stories and other writings have appeared in many small magazines in the U.S., Canada, England and Scotland. He began selling his books on the streets of Toronto in 1978. He also writes the advice column for *Rustler* and is well-known in his community as a moral degenerate.

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